

Frontier Life



When colonists settled here in the 1700s, the Intervale was the most sought-after land in all Vermont. What made it so valuable? It was easier to feed a family here than in the mountains. The Intervale was flat and fertile, with the longest growing season in northern Vermont. The Winooski River attracted wild game and fish, even in the winter when other food was scarce.

Ethan Allen, the hard-drinking, hard-fighting Revolutionary War hero, chose this spot for his frontier farm. Allen settled here over 200 years ago with his family and two free African-Americans he had befriended. He loved the Intervale, calling it "equal to any tract of land that I ever saw." Today you can explore Allen's life on the frontier in the museum on the bluff to your right.



Early Yard Work

Ethan Allen owned 1400 acres of untouched forest here, although he only grew crops on the forty-acre meadow in front of you. To clear the land, Allen and two farmhands cut down trees that were seven feet in diameter. It took several oxen to pull each tree trunk out of the forest. Allen then cut the roots of each stump and used the oxen to pull them out. It took another forty days to plow the forty-acre field once it was cleared.



What's for Dinner?

In Ethan Allen's house, the family of eleven cooked and ate dinner in this room. Frontier meals were no picnic. It took an entire day to churn milk into butter, bake bread or turn dried beans and old turnips into something edible. The children worked hard, too—hauling water, tending the fire, and shelling beans.



City Girl

Before she married Ethan Allen, Fanny Allen was a city girl. She grew up among fashionable, wealthy people in New York City. In this portrait, stylish young Fanny strolls through a flower garden, with her pet bird on a leash. Imagine how she felt when her new husband brought her to this isolated home, miles from the nearest neighbors!

Photograph labeled "City Girl" courtesy Fort Ticonderoga Museum. All other images courtesy Ethan Allen Homestead.